



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

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BORDER OFFICIALS PLEAD GUILTY TO IMMIGRATION RELATED CHARGES

TUCSON, Ariz. - Christopher E. Bemis, 24, formerly of Sierra Vista, Ariz., and Ramon M. Sanchez Jr., 42, of Tucson, Ariz. each pleaded guilty here in federal district court to one count of Harboring an Illegal Alien. Bemis is a former Customs and Border Protection agent who was assigned to the Naco, Ariz., Border Patrol Station. Sanchez is a Detention Officer with Department of Homeland Security in Tucson, Ariz. Bemis and Sanchez were charged separately in unrelated cases.

U.S. Attorney Paul K. Charlton stated, "Law enforcement personnel who are responsible for enforcing the immigration laws of this country cannot violate the very laws they are charged with enforcing. They must be held to a higher standard in all aspects of their lives."

Bemis had been charged with one count of Harboring an Illegal Alien. In a plea agreement with the government, Bemis admitted that Mayra Isel Jimenez-Ramirez resided with him in his home in Sierra Vista, Ariz. from approximately June 2004 to February 2005. Bemis also admitted that he knew that Jimenez-Ramirez did not have authorization to enter or remain in the United States.

Sanchez had been charged with nine counts relating to illegally bringing into the U.S., and transporting and harboring within the U.S., his wife and her 10-year-old son. In a plea agreement with the government, Sanchez admitted that he met Flor Liliana Velasco-Barrera at her workplace. He began a romantic relationship with her in August of 2004 knowing that she was an undocumented alien. Although Sanchez knew that Velasco-Barrera's illegal employment and residence in the U.S. would subject her to removal for violating the conditions of her non-immigrant visa, Sanchez and Velasco-Barrera married on February 25, 2005 and she lived with him at his residence in Tucson until April 11, 2005.

A conviction for Harboring an Illegal Alien carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both. In determining an actual sentence, the assigned judge in each case will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence. Sentencing in the Bemis case is set before Judge Zapata on January 10, 2006. Sentencing in the Sanchez case is set before Judge Roll on January 30, 2006.

The investigations in these cases were conducted by Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General (DHS-OIG) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The prosecutions are being handled by Cynthia Wood (Bemis case) and Mary Sue Feldmeier (Sanchez case), Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz.

CASE NUMBER: Bemis: CR-05-0453- TUC
Sanchez: CR-05-0960-TUC
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